1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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Two of its walls were of the plaited palm fronds which were entwined into so pleasant a pattern on the houses of the Bush Negroes. The side walls, however, were carpentered of slats which formed a paling, and over this the slanting roof hung. Through the spaces between the slats we could see the brown feet of the passing villagers, an occasional flare of a gay tunic, or a corner of a man's cloth. Occasionally the big eyes of a child who had wandered over to the paling peered through, to see what was happening inside. Through the slats of the wall nearest to the Granman's house we saw tall earthen jars resting on a plank. There were perhaps four of them, all of varying sizes, and these held creek and river water to which the magic properties of weeds and incantations had been added.

The purposes of these slats were manifold Not everyone could sit within the council house when the tribal chiefs gathered. Only those whose rank qualified them appeared inside when court was held. But to those sitting quietly outside those palings which formed the side walls of the house, what was spoken inside was clearly audible, and it was thus that many listened for the decisions which they awaited. Then, too, since this was an enclosed council house and when the door was open a plaid cloth hung over the doorway to insure privacy, the only light which penetrated came through these openings in the side walls. The eaves hung low, barring much of the light that might have come through the palings, and this alowed but the grayest flicker even at midday and brought into the council house the atmosphere which symbolized to them the cool of morning. The word "cool" was their image for peace, and health, and fairness, and deliberation, and justice. Inside the council house, then, was a light which "cooled the heart," for heart and head are synonymous to the Bush Negro when he speaks of emotional states.

It was not a large house, and it appeared smaller because of the many furnishings that were in it. Against the wall facing the door a number of magnificently carved benches lay on their sides, one on top of the other, there obviously

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Above the door was a shelf which did not quite reach the entire width of the wall, and on this shelf were the council benches, which the Granman supplied to the visiting chiefs. These benches were small, low, and as little ornamented with carvings as the work stools used by the women. But on the sides symbols were incised, and at least two of them we were able to identify as clan emblems. One of these had the conventionalized patterning of the hatchet, the emblem of the Granman's clan, and another a flower which is associated with the people from whose group come the principal diviners. The tops of these simple stools sometimes had inlays of dark wood, but whether their outlines were of ritualistic importance or not, no one would say.

From the beams hung several umbrellas, still inside the wrappings in which they had come from the white man's city, and a wickless metal lamp, into whose chains envelopes were inserted. These envelopes contained letters received by the Granman which awaited the coming of the missionary to be read, or letters which had already been read, and were there to add color to the official scene.

There were also other *Bakra sani*—white man's things—in the house. A canvas folding chair which filled almost an entire wall stood against the slats beside which, on the outside, were the earthen jars. This was for the Granman. He sat in it with the majesty of an emperor. No one ever approached it too closely, and we were never invited to take our ease in it when the Granman was in his own house.

In addition, there was a table in the center of the room, covered with a red and black plaid cloth from the city, and two straight-back chairs. On the table stood an alarm clock which was set for the noncommittal hour of twelve and a glass decanter filled with rum.

Chief And'u was the first to join us inside.

"It is fine here at the G'aman's."

"Yes, it is a fine house. And you, And'u, you look well in your coat. Is it when you are with the Granman that you dress so?"

THE GODS SPEAK

"The openings in the wall there," she explained, when we asked her about the two squares cut into the wall behind the altar, "are for all things that fly. In this place they must come and go as they like. Bats come here, and insects of all kinds, and when they want to go back to the bush, they must be able to go as they like. That is the wish of the gods. So they told us long ago."

6

We were led from house to house. The gods had spoken. We were friends, and as friends who came not to harm, we were given the hospitality of friendship. There were other shrines, but we did not have to ask about them. They were pointed out to us with the other sights of the village.

The closed low hut near the Apuku shrine we had entered was to the river god Toné. It was a very small enclosure, and before it was a plant which covered the low entrance. It belonged, we were told, to an albino woman who was possessed by Toné. But she was not in the village now. Farther down the path was a larger house, another shrine. This had a piece of iron over the door and, when we asked about it, the girls who were following us ran, and the men merely said that it was the place of the Kromanti obia and passed on.

As we continued on our way, each woman was anxious not to have us slight the house her man had built her or fail to admire the carvings that were inserted into the weave of the palm walls. The huts were swept clean—the cleanliness of the entire village was even more striking than that of others we had visited—and but for a few stools, which were brought out for the strangers while they spoke with the old people who lived in the quarter, they were entirely bare. In every house, however, there was sure to be a shelf, large or small, or several shelves, on which stood prized food trays with carvings which covered both inner and outer surfaces. Combs and food stirrers were taken down and shown us, and the calabash dishes made by the women

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353 themselves, and the blade-like pieces of gourd which they
531 used for spoons, and which bore the same symbols as the
415 dishes.

"Our men make fine things here in the true, true
462 Saramacca," Dida said when we entered her quarter, and
531 sat in her house. "Look at the carvings I have."

Her body was still white with pemba. Her manner was still a little vague.

"Did you dance this morning?"

"Ai."

"We heard the agida drum play when we were in the
776 council house of the Granman."
787 "Ai, Kesekia is a big god. When he comes, his voice is strong."

But she showed no willingness to talk, and we could tell by the repeated twitching of her body that she had still to dance to her god. Leaving her we continued up the path toward houses we had not yet visited. The white man, with a man who was guiding him and the bassia from Asindopo Lantiwe, walked ahead, while the children crowded about the white woman who was giving them safety pins which they at once put in their hair.

"There is the Vodu house," said the man who acted as
778 guide, and he led the way through the low doorway into
346 the hut.

Inside, though smaller than the shrine to the gods of the bush, it differed from it but little. It had the same clay floor, the same raised altar on which stood stools washed in white clay, and several covered, whitened vessels, an image, and the round balls of clay.

"May I go closer and look at the image there?"

"Yes, go."

[352] The stools resembled those in ordinary use, but whatever design they may have had was obscured by the white clay which covered them. The vessels were not unlike those in
[415] the other shrine we had visited or those which rested on the heads of village gods which stood under low, roofed-over shelters on the main village paths. Turning, the white man

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THE ARTIST OF MA'LOBBI

As we walked toward the chief's house we looked about us, seeing again the evidence that here at Ma'lobbi there were men who knew how to carve wood, seeing why it was that our paddlers had spoken of it as a place for fine work.

"Ai, at Ma'lobbi they are good carvers."

Here was a house with its doorposts elaborately carved; there a beautifully worked rice tray, lying where it had been left by the woman who owned it, until she should need it later in the day for winnowing her rice; farther along a great bench stood, with the designs cut through in a fluid progression over top and sides.

The captain was in the lower portion of his two-story house when we entered. Several of the older men, who had been present at our earlier visit and who remembered our gifts of tobacco, came to join us, as the news of our arrival spread through the village. Soon the women were standing about, motioning to the white woman to come with them.

The house in which the captain received us was larger and more imposing than the others in the village. It was his *gudu-wosu*—his treasure house. Its lower portion, where we sat in conversation with him, was where he worked. Above, where none of his wives might enter, his wealth was stored. Here he kept the pieces he had carved, and from here drew from time to time the presents he gave his wives. Here lay the wealth which his nephews would inherit when he died. But below, in the partially open shelter, was his workshop where he fashioned rough logs into stools and paddles, combs and food stirrers, trays and canoe seats, and all manner of objects which he and his women used in their daily routine.

All about the walls hung tools. There were machetes, whose sharp blades showed a reflection of fire from the sun which slanted on the wall. We had never seen so many of these bush knives on display, nor, for that matter, such an array of tools anywhere on this river. From projecting boards or nails driven into posts hung several compasses, their hinged arms sharp-pointed, so that the craftsman might describe the perfect circles on the wood he carved.

1tHerskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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This they had learned from the whites long ago, and now everywhere on the river compasses were seen, or carvings which showed their use. The machete, the small sharp knives which lay about here on the work-table, the compass, and sand made up any Bush Negro carver's tools. But here at Ma'lobbi in this workshop of the captain were tools from the white man's city, collected by himself on his journeys down to the government office to receive his yearly allowance, or by his men who had been to the French shore and learned of the ways of the outside world. There was a plane to make the blade of a paddle smooth as the skin of a child, and there were two others in addition to this one, we were assured, in the treasure house of the upper story. Hammers, too, were useful for making boats, and even for smaller carvings like benches. There was also a bit and auger, though we were never convinced that the captain himself had ever put it to its more prosaic uses.

"I have many more up there," said the captain, pointing to the upper story. "I like them. If a man likes his tools, then they help him in his carvings. As he sees with his eyes, so they cut. I have always liked my tools, white man. I have spent much time with them."

A young man sat to one side shaving down a block of wood with a knife which he held.

"He is not carving," the captain said, following our eyes. "He is making a piece for this," he explained, indicating a plane. "Now is not the time for carving. There is too much to be done. This is the time for cutting wood, for making the rafts down the river, for making boats, for bleeding rubber trees for the white man, and for hunting game. When the great rains come, then men sit about and carve."

As he spoke our eyes traveled to the various carvings which stood about the workshop. In one corner leaned a paddle which caught our attention because of its darkened color, and the patina which long use had given it, so that it seemed made of ebony. Against another wall were several stools, all richly ornamented with carvings, while beside us,

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
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the trading-post, are so large as to have street-like roads extending across them. Others like Nu have only eight or nine huts.

The walls and roofs of the dwellings are made of grasses and reeds, intricately woven into a herring-bone pattern that can be seen in the photographs. So tightly are they woven that the jungle rain does not penetrate. The uprights are hewn out of tree trunks, and those that form the doorway are often deeply carved. So great is the decorative spirit of these people that every common utensil is carved until it becomes a work of art.

The roofs extend far beyond the walls, so that the projecting part throws a shadow on the walls, which lowers the temperature inside. In front, the roof extends a yard or more to form a shade in which the blacks may palaver. In front of the huts, always, babies are grubbing about in the dirt and yelling prodigiously.

Here and there are slightly dilapidated huts. They belong to people now dead. No one will live in them or venture to repair the ruin of time. Neglected, they sink into decay. The witch doctor's hut is also a bit frowzy; it seems to be a badge of his profession, like the sugar cane planted alongside his doorway or the turtle-shell impaled on a staff near by. All three are symbols of his calling.

A wall of woven mat divides some of the huts into two rooms, the back room being used for sleeping. The men have hand-made hammocks of woven cotton or grass. Their wives are provided with sleeping-mats on the floor. The front room

354 /9 cont./
[372] they do not like to be without it; at least they do not like to
[353] sleep without a fire. Their weapons hang above their sleeping
[513] place, which is a hammock, in which man and wife sometimes lie together. Rarely do more than one man and one woman with their
342 small children live in a single hut.

296 Their articles of clothing, as well as other small belongings,
251 are kept in pagalen, a kind of plaited basketwork, while they keep
415 water, strong drink, sugar juice, rice, salt, and so forth in
124 calabashes and godos (2).

2. Both hollowed-out fruit rinds of the Crescentia cagete L. and the Cucurbita lagenaria L., plants from the family of the Cucurbitaceae.

415 Some of them have cedarwood clothes-chests, which must be specially mounted with a great deal of copper; one also sometimes finds liqueur cellars with gilded bottles.

353 For the rest everything is left out in the open in the hut.

264 Often many men come together in one hut for their meals and eat out of one large bowl or calabash. The women withdraw after having placed on very low tables several calabashes or bowls of food for their husbands in the circle in which they are seated, never forgetting to add a large calabash with clean water for washing the hands before and after the meal. The women gather in another hut in order to consume what they kept out for themselves beforehand and what has been left by their husbands.

[888] If an aged person or a highly placed person is in their midst,
[559] he is offered the calabash of food first, so that he may take from it what he wants and eat it by himself from an ordinary plate, although seated in the circle, /10/ while the others partake of their meal from the large bowl. In general they talk with one another during the meal, the highly placed person also taking part in the conversation.

6:Hurault--107a K-5 (1948-1958) 1961 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
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Fig. 15. House type of the Refugee Blacks; Loabi village (Djuka of the Upper Tapanahoni).